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as young men, and had known the independence and supremacy of the Ngoni kingdoms. The expression 'everything is finished now' was often on their lips, especially when faced by new demands from the government, or by rebellious attitudes from their former subject peoples.

'The middle generation' was the term applied to the men who had as children known the Ngoni kingdoms in their prime. Though they had never fought as warriors nor been enrolled in an age-regiment, some of them had gone to the wars as young boys, carrying the gear for their older brothers. Many of these men, especially in the North, came under the influence of the missions, and became teachers, clerks, ministers and hospital assistants, married Christian wives and brought up their children in Christian, but Ngoni Christian, families. These men never lost their attachment to the Ngoni way of living, and many of them had made a successful synthesis of the old and the new ways. They stood, as they said, 'between' the generations, for they knew and understood both sides of an immensely different way of living and standard of values. Their children were 'the generation of today', who had no personal experience of past Ngoni ascendancy, and who took mission schooling and working for wages as a normal feature of their life.

When I lived in Ngoni villages, such as those described briefly in this chapter, Ngoni values and attitudes dominated social relationships. There was a determined struggle on the part of all responsible for child training to inculcate these Ngoni ideas and ways of living. The senior men and women were aware of the constant and increasing infiltration into their way of living of ideas, attitudes and behaviour coming from other ethnic groups in their midst. In addition their culture was being undermined by European influences in the schools, in the money economy, and from modern political developments, emphasizing an all-Nyasaland sentiment rather than loyalties based on ethnic grouping. Ngoni pride of race, and a consciousness that they had a

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of this book, especially Chapters IV and V will show how the organization of Ngoni society and the cultural way of living in it, necessarily surrounded the life of children and the training given to them with a much wider horizon. We shall talk about the family, the household, the village as the setting of Ngoni child life, but these terms have to be interpreted according to the Ngoni social organization, sketched very briefly in Chapter I and set out at length in my earlier book *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*. Looked at from another angle, we can see that a young child's horizon in Ngoni villages was limited at first to what he saw around him and the people who had daily or frequent contact with him and who understood and supplied his daily needs. But that circle of people forming a young child's contacts was from the beginning much wider than the individual family which a child was born into. When he began to run about and to pass beyond the restricted confines of the household, it was as we shall see, the duty and responsibility of all Ngoni adults to notice his behaviour and correct him when necessary.

The relationships inside the large Ngoni families, between one family and another in a Ngoni village, with related families in other villages, with all members of the same clan living in an area—these were threads in the web of kinship and clanship which united the Ngoni people. These threads were also inseparable from the political links between the people and their territorial chief, and between the whole people and the Paramount, the head of the kingdom. The difference, however, between the Ngoni kingdom under the Paramount which included all his subjects of Ngoni and non-Ngoni ethnic groups, and the Ngoni aristocracy in the villages was a profound difference. It was the latter who understood, appreciated and sought to hand on to their children Ngoni ways of living based on Ngoni values. Hence in most villages there were sharp distinctions between standards of behaviour within Ngoni families and in non-Ngoni families.

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women helpers of his mother's age, one or two of whom had come with her at her marriage to attend her, and who themselves had married in her new village. Above them again were the older women helpers of his grandmother's generation, themselves grandmothers, whom he addressed as 'grandmother', as he did his own grandparents.

There were other sets of people whom the young child saw less often. When he visited his mother's relatives in her old home, he enjoyed all the allurement a child feels for living in a different place among people who want to gratify his every wish. Sometimes the maternal relatives visited the child's home, but then their relationship with him was on more formal terms. They did not dare for example to give him titbits in private, or to pet him, or even to correct him, lest his father's relatives might notice and remind them: 'This is *our* child.'

Other strangers came and went all the time, and the child learned to distinguish between the village inhabitants and those he, and others, designated as 'strangers'. He saw mostly the women who were entertained in the compound of his grandmother. He was sometimes taken by his mother when she went to greet strangers by the big house, and he learned early that he was not expected to make a noise or call attention to himself in the presence of these strangers.

In this women's world the higher age-group in each status group, that is of relatives and helpers, carried the chief authority, gave orders, and rebuked all below them for breaches of etiquette or failure to carry out commands. For the small child, the whole superstructure of authority in the women's world built round his daily life a sense of security, partly because it was so ordered and so little variable. When the Ngoni said, 'A child belongs to all the village. They can all cherish him and correct him,' they really meant this women's world, organized through the households and the families and the houses. The child's needs for food and sleep, washing and warmth, care when sick, were taken care of

VILLAGE LIFE FOR OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

There was no doubt that this abrupt transition, like the sudden weaning, was a shock for many boys between six-and-a-half and seven-and-a-half. From having been impudent, well-fed, self-confident and spoiled youngsters among the women many of them quickly became skinny, scruffy, subdued and with a hunted expression. The subdued and hunted looks passed off as they adjusted themselves to their new environment and there were boys, generally those exceptionally well grown and physically strong, who showed no apparent signs of shock. They all, however, showed the effects of irregular and inadequate feeding. The younger boys were chronically hungry and their hair and skin and bony knees and ribs were eloquent of calory, protein and vitamin shortages.

The other main purpose of dormitory life in Ngoni culture was to mix up all the boys in the village and let the common life together teach them how to get on with their age-mates and knuckle under to their superiors in age. Age and strength were the only criteria for authority. Older brothers might try to protect and intercede for younger brothers but it was not encouraged. All the young ones had to take their chance equally, without regard for their family name or their father's position.

The dormitory was primarily a sleeping-place, but through the group of boys who slept there the herding of cattle was organized and the off-duty amusements and occupations of the older boys were planned. The young ones had to 'fag' for the rest, fetching wood and water, keeping fires going, sweeping the hut, taking messages, huddling in a corner at night when the oldest boys brought girls in, and submitting to beatings both as a warning and as a punishment. They were usually beaten once or twice soon after their arrival and then threatened with much worse if they ever divulged what went on in the dormitory. It was not however a torture house, far from it, and the boys boasted of belonging to 'our dormitory' and were proud of having their own hidden life

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in general, encouraged co-operation between tribes and have treated all tribes as equals. They have emphasized the values of peace rather than a war, and have condemned pagan rites. In the light of this teaching legends have been modified to conform to modern values. The barbarity of the raids has been minimized and the good qualities of the old military discipline have been extolled. Sometimes men say that the old armies never fought but only danced, or that people from other tribes were not captured but all joined the Ngoni of their own free will (as in fact some did). It is said that there was never any ancestor-worship; the names of the Paramount Chief's ancestors were merely mentioned in prayers "as King George is mentioned now". This process by which the Ngoni conquerors of yesterday are made to look like the European conquerors of today is no new phenomenon. The Ngoni identified themselves with European rather than with their matrilineal neighbours even before the European conquest. Wiese, himself the main agent of their defeat, wrote, "They are very proud, looking down on all the other tribes with contempt, and think they show great courtesy whenever they assure the European traveller that the Whites may be related to them."[4]

Another traveller, arriving from the south in 1896, relates how he ran into an armed patrol on the outskirts of Ngoni country. His own carriers ran away but he called out to the patrol that he was a friend of the Paramount Chief, speaking in Zulu. He then heard them saying, "He is an Ngoni and a white man."[5] My own informants told me that the old Ngoni language was closer to English than to Nyanja.

This reinterpretation of the past in the light of the present has not produced a consistent picture of a proto-European society. The inconsistencies of the present remain and are reflected in the ambivalent attitude adopted to the past. Although in one context people recall that everything was well ordered and peaceful in the past, in other contexts they dwell on the unlimited power of the Paramount Chief and the fierceness of his warriors. An aristocratic man once said to me at a beer party, "If this was the old days I would kill all these Cewa drinking here." Yet the general impression which people usually try to convey is of a disciplined, proud, and successful people.

This picture is accepted not only by Ngoni themselves but also by Europeans. For us it is one part of the good old days when Africans still smiled and were nature's gentlemen. Our picture of the Ngoni contains fewer concessions to contemporary White values, for the very distinction between Whites now and Blacks then increases the attractiveness of the picture. Ancestor worship and polygyny are not unwelcome in a Black Arcadia.

Ngoni nowadays compare themselves with their European and Indian neighbours and envy their apparent power and wealth. They seek to rationalize their own relative failure in terms of their past. It is in this connection

4. Wiese, *Geschichte*, pp. 200 f.

5. Later, when he had satisfactorily answered questions on Zululand geography, Mp'zeni said of him, "He is a chief . . . he is an Angoni, one of us." Deare, *Slave Raiders*, pp. 19 and 25.

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is now a subject taught in the primary schools. All these are based on the recollections of old Ngoni men and women more than on contemporary documents, of which there are very few. We must therefore regard them as written legends rather than proper histories. Differences between one version and another are sometimes related to the different political affiliations of these providing the information.[6] The period from 1821 to 1898 is treated in detail and the remaining fifty years dismissed in a few lines. It seems likely therefore that in time the tribal legend will be ossified, or that at least there will be one version widely known. Yet the vernacular texts are written in the school language (Nyanja) which is not yet the ordinary village speech (Nsenga), and are learned largely parrot-fashion, sometimes even with unintelligible words included. It remains to be seen how much of what is learnt under these conditions is carried over into life outside the classroom.

With the increasing documentation of modern life we might well hope that the period of legend alone will end and Ngoni history proper will begin. Unfortunately this is not so. Although it is fairly easy to find out from contemporary documents what went on in tribal affairs from 1890 to 1898, with the imposition of British rule a curtain descended. Official reports grow shorter and shorter with the years for there was less and less to record. Towards the end of the British South Africa Company's rule the published information on Ngoni life was little more than the annual statement, covering the whole of Northern Rhodesia, that "the conduct of the natives has been satisfactory". From the beginning of Colonial Office control in 1924 reports have lengthened, but these have dealt with the history not of the Ngoni tribe but of the Eastern Province and of Northern Rhodesia. These larger regions have become the significant units of government, not individual tribes and chiefdoms. The Fort Jameson Ngoni have become more and more closely integrated with the wider society and less and less have any history of their own. When the Ngoni were making history they lacked means to record it; now that means are available they have no history to record.

Thus we see that in this transitional society internal and external relations, as well as the level of technical skill, influence both the way in which people relate themselves to their past and also the timing and content of their written history.

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6. Read and Winterbottom have pointed out that informants from Northern Nyasaland assert that their Paramount Chief is the heir of Zwangondaba, while those from Fort Jameson say that their Chief is the heir. Cf. Read, *Tradition and Prestige*, p. 467, and Winterbottom, *Outline Histories*, p. 17.